

Wellness

Overview

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 required all districts to establish local school wellness policies by school year 2006-2007. In 2010 the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act expanded the scope of wellness policies to bring in additional stakeholders and required public updates on the content and implementation of the wellness policies. The intent of the new legislation is to use the wellness policy as a useful tool in evaluating, establishing, and maintaining healthy school environments, and to provide transparency to the public on key areas that affect the nutrition environment in each school. The final rule for the Local School Wellness Policy was finalized July 29, 2016, with the requirement that districts be in full compliance by June 30, 2017.

Terminology

Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 - Law signed on June 30, 2004, by President Bush to strengthen nutritional service programs, promote healthy choices among children, and address concerns that the federal school lunch program does not do enough to ensure free and reduced-price lunch benefits go to children who qualify.

Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 - Bill signed on December 13, 2010, to support new paperless options for universal meal service, improve the process of direct certification, enhance the quality of school nutrition programs, and authorize grants for expansion of School Breakfast Programs.

Nutrition education - The process of teaching students how to choose and enjoy healthy foods along with the benefits that healthy foods have for one's body and mind.

Nutrition promotion - The process of sharing healthy nutrition messages and encouraging healthy nutrition activities both in and out of the classroom. Examples include signage, food tastings, presentations by nutrition experts, nutrition newsletters, etc.

Other school-based wellness activities - Additional programs available for schools that include, but are not limited to: Farm to School, School Gardens, Smarter Lunchrooms, Chefs Move to Schools, Recognition and Award Programs, Mental Health Programs, Drug Free Initiatives, and CPR Training.

Physical activity - Any bodily movement produced by skeletal muscles that requires energy expenditure. Children should participate each day in a variety of age-appropriate physical activities designed to achieve optimal health, wellness, fitness, and performance benefits.

What is Wellness?

The wellness committee which develops, implements, and evaluates the local school wellness policy must solicit participation from the following stakeholders:

- School Board
- Administration
- Physical Education Instructors
- School Health Professionals
- Community Members
- Students
- Parents
- Food Service Staff

School Wellness Policies must include goals for:

- Nutrition Guidelines for all foods/beverages available during the school day (School Breakfast Program, National School Lunch Program, and Smart Snacks)
- Nutrition Education - include specific/measurable goals for nutrition education using evidence-based strategies
- Nutrition Promotion - include specific/measurable goals for nutrition promotion using evidence-based strategies
- Physical Activity - includes specific/measurable goals for physical activity using evidence-based strategies
- Other School-Based Wellness - includes specific/measurable goals other school-based wellness activities using evidence-based strategies

The wellness policy must permit marketing of only those foods/beverages that meet the competitive food requirements.

The school wellness policy and updates to the wellness policy must be made available to the public annually. The results of wellness policy implementation and progress towards policy goals must be communicated to the public. The school district must review the wellness policy for compliance & adherence a minimum of every three years. In order to facilitate this process, there must be a designee with the authority/responsibility to ensure each school is in compliance with the school wellness policy.

Why is Wellness Important?

Local school wellness policies are an important tool for parents, local educational agencies (LEAs), and school districts in promoting student wellness, preventing and reducing childhood obesity, and providing assurance that school meal nutrition guidelines meet the minimum federal school meal standards.

Resources

Additional resources may be available for this topic. Please check the Idaho School Nutrition Reference Guide website for copies of manuals, user guides, and helpful links to relevant subject matter. Also, visit “Healthy Nutrition Environment” on the Child Nutrition Programs webpage.